

**SEEK THE LORD— Sunday February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013.**

***Seek the Lord while He may be found;  
Call upon Him while He is near.  
<sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And let him return to the Lord,  
And He will have compassion on him,  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon.. (Isaiah 55:6-7)***

Beloved in the Lord,

Our text today is calling us to Seek The Lord while He may be found, and to call upon Him while He is near. This implies that a time may come when it will be too late to do so. Wouldn't it be tragic to find yourself in eternity without God? To be in a place of utter darkness and separation forever, all because you did not seek Him or heed His voice? You passed up on the opportunity to live for Him and to trust in Him.

Over and over again, the Word of God is urging us to seek the Lord, to call upon His name, to ask, seek and knock. God does not impose Himself upon anyone, but to those who seek Him with all their heart, He will be found.

Jesus clearly promised this. He said:

***“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”*** (Matthew 7:7-8)

This is a clear promise given to us in God's Holy Word. God has done all that He is going to do. He has provided for us that we can live life in a close and loving relationship with Him. Through Jesus God has opened up the path. Our duty is to ask, seek and knock. When we do, we receive.

There are two events in the New Testament that illustrate to us the value of seeking and asking. They show us what happens when we seek Jesus.

The first is a day in the life of Zaccheus the tax collector. We read:

***“He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. <sup>3</sup> Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” <sup>6</sup> And he hurried***

***and came down and received Him gladly. <sup>7</sup> When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup> Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:1-10)***

Zaccheus has heard of and about Jesus. He had a desire to see Jesus. The crowds have flocked out onto the streets to catch a glimpse of Jesus. Zaccheus runs out but has no chance. He is short. No-one is going to give way to him, because they all hated him. He could have thought to himself "it's not worth it; I'll go back to counting my money." But he didn't. Something in his heart was stirring. He wanted to see Jesus. He ran ahead of the crowd and climbed up a tree. He had a good vantage point.

Jesus draws near. Zaccheus heart is pounding. There He is. That's what He looks like. Suddenly Jesus stops right under the very tree where Zaccheus is. He looks up and speaks to him. Not only that, Jesus tells Him that He is coming to his house. His house! Unbelievable.

You see this appointment had been written in God's diary unbeknownst to Zaccheus. Zaccheus search for Jesus led not only to Jesus visiting his house, it led to salvation for Zaccheus and his household. Had Zaccheus not sought Jesus, he would have missed out.

The second event also involves the same town of Jericho. We read about a blind man who called out to Jesus.

***Then they \*came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. <sup>47</sup> When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>48</sup> Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup> And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." So they \*called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you." <sup>50</sup> Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup> And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!" <sup>52</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road." (Mark 10:46-52)***

Blind Bartimaeus is sitting by the roadside begging. What else can he do? He has done this every day for such a long time. But something is different today- there seems to be a lot more people out and about than usual. It is loud and people are excited. Bartimeus asks the passers-by what is happening. Someone tells him that Jesus is coming this way. Bartimeus has a glimmer of hope. Jesus! If only.....His heart begins to pound. If only I could talk to Jesus. As he felt that Jesus is drawing near he called out "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on

me." People tell him to shut up. Jesus has no time for you. He is on a mission. Be quiet you old beggar. Ah, but Bartimeus was not going to be quiet. No way. This is his one and only hope, one and only chance. He calls out even louder. Jesus stops. Someone runs up to Bartimeus with the good news: "He wants to see you." What joy. He throws off his only possession, his cloak and comes to Jesus.

Jesus clearly knows what Bartimeus wants, but yet He asks him: **"What do you want Me to do for you?"** You see Jesus wanted Bartimeus to verbalise his need, because in so doing he is confessing his faith in Jesus. : **"Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!"** In saying this, Bartimeus is expressing faith that Jesus can help him regain his sight. Jesus simply said to him: **"Go; your faith has made you well."** Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus.

As in the case of Zaccheus, Bartimeus called upon the Lord. They called upon Him while He could be found. They took the opportunity and called upon Jesus and found our text today to be absolutely true: **"He will have compassion on him."** God is abundant in mercy. Let's have another read of our passage:

***"Seek the Lord while He may be found;  
Call upon Him while He is near.  
7 Let the wicked forsake his way  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And let him return to the Lord,  
And He will have compassion on him,  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon.. (Isaiah 55:6-7)***

You know, the sad thing is that many people do not call upon the Lord, because they simply do not believe that He is merciful and compassionate. Many say to themselves: " God will not listen to me, I am not worth it, He doesn't care about me." That is simply not true.

This is not how God sees things at all. He loves you and wants you to call upon His name. You are a precious human being. He shed the blood of Jesus on the cross in order to pay your sin debt in full, so that you could draw near to Him. He did it because He loves you.

***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16***

Allow this truth to sink deep into your heart and spirit. God loves you! He is waiting for you to call upon Him. He invites you to come to Him. Listen to the words of Jesus:

***"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28)***

Notice Jesus wants us to come to Him and He promises to give us rest. Oh there is so much that He wants to give us. Let us seek Him while He can be found and let us call upon Him while He is near and we will find that He will have compassion on us and that He will abundantly pardon.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.